

“Deaning: A View from the Other Side”

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ECEDHA Newsletter

September 12, 2011

This time last year I was the Chair of the School of ECE at Georgia Tech, as well as a proud and active member of the ECEDHA Executive Board. In fact, I was the incoming Vice President, and I fully expected to be spending this year planning the agenda for the ECEDHA Annual Conference in Austin, Texas next March.

Well, something unexpected happened on the road to Austin. I was appointed Dean of the College of Engineering at Georgia Tech on July 1, 2011 and officially kicked out of ECEDHA. Now that I have a view from the dark(er) side, my good friend Hossein Mousavinezhad, EECS Chair at Idaho State and editor of this year's ECEDHA newsletter, asked me to share some thoughts about some issues that might be of interest to ECE chairs and department heads. As a result, you are about to reap the benefits of the wisdom garnered of my two months as a dean. I decide to focus on just a few relevant topics. Here goes:

Vision: It is likely that one of the reasons deans are appointed is because they have a vision for the college. A couple of useful exercises to initiate at the very beginning of a deanship are team building activities and strategic planning – particularly if no strategic plan exists or the existing strategic plan is becoming dated. These mechanisms provide the new dean with an opportunity to develop a shared strategic vision for the college that is aligned with university goals.

Visibility: It is very important for a dean to be a visible spokesperson for the vision articulated above. A dean is a much more externally focused role than school chair or department head. However, visibility is not limited to the outside world. The dean and the dean's office must also add value and be accessible to faculty, students, and other internal constituents.

Transparency: Transparency is important in any leadership position. I know what you're thinking: "Didn't he just say a dean needs to be visible? How can the dean be both visible and transparent at the same time?" Well, visibility refers to the dean's *presence*, whereas transparency refers to the dean's *policies*. It is important for people to know what policies exist and why decisions are made. This builds trust and loyalty. To encourage transparency in the dean's office, one of my early initiatives has been to produce an on-line policy manual for the college. The manual is intended to be a "one stop shop" for faculty members to find institutional policies and learn how to work with our office.

Budgeting: One of the key responsibilities of the dean's office is resource allocation. In the spirit of transparency, it is important to allocate scarce resources in a systematic and objective manner. In the case of determining budgets for the disciplinary units that report to the dean, we have found success and satisfaction using a quantitative approach that uses such factors as enrollment, student credit hours taught, research expenditures, and other measurable factors to generate budgets for the schools within the college.

Development: Another key responsibility is generating those resources that need to be allocated. I would estimate that more than a third of my time is spent on activities that span the development spectrum – from identification to cultivation to solicitation to stewardship. Also, a competent development officer is an invaluable asset to any dean.

Protocol: The higher one gets on the "leadership ladder," the more noticeable the inclination becomes for some faculty members to bring their issues directly to the top. As dean, you should resist the temptation to usurp the school chair's authority and try to address every issue. The faculty members should try to address their issues locally with their chairs before bringing them to the dean. This preserves protocol and helps maintain a good working relationship with the chairs.

Well, that's the sum of my accumulated wisdom thus far. I have found the role of Dean of Engineering to be an exciting challenge. Any time I can be an advocate for the engineering profession is time well spent. I

would like to thank my colleagues in ECEDHA for the valuable experiences I have had with the organization that have helped prepare me for my new responsibilities.